SHARP-SHOOTER

TAKING AIM TO BETTER SERVE THE CUSTOMER

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SHARP Entry Cutoff Dates for October, 2000

In October 2000, AKSESS (Automated Kansas State Employees Service System) presents Benefits Open Enrollment for group health insurance and flexible spending accounts. Employees will make their year 2001 enrollment choices over the Internet. The following article talks about how SHARP (Statewide Human Resource and Payroll System) data affects AKSESS.

The Department of Administration needs to process several programs that retrieve data from the SHARP system prior to having the AKSESS system available to employees on October 1, 2000. Therefore, the AKSESS system will use data residing in the SHARP system as of September 10, 2000 to determine an employee's eligibility for the various group health insurance plans offered during the Fall 2000 open enrollment cycle.

In order to ensure accurate and up-to-date employee information resides in the AKSESS system, agencies should enter all employee job data related transactions by September 10, 2000. This includes new hires, rehires, terminations, promotions, demotions, etc. Any data that affects an employee's benefits eligibility such as address, name change, etc., that is not entered by this date will not appear in the AKSESS benefits open enrollment system during the month of October. This also includes changes to health benefits, vision, dental and flexible spending account data. Transactions not entered prior to the September 10th cutoff should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, as the employee may still be able to complete their open enrollment online. For example, an employee with a name change may try to access their information using their new name but the name change may not have been entered in SHARP by September 10th. Agencies should inform the employee to use the last name that existed in SHARP prior to September 10th to successfully complete their enrollment on-line.

However, any employee hired or rehired after September 10, 2000 will not be able to use the AKSESS open enrollment system. These employees should contact their agency human resource officer to complete a paper enrollment form.

If you have any questions about how a specific SHARP transaction affects an employee's ability to complete their enrollment on the Internet, contact the Help Desk, after September 18th, at (785) 368-8000 and select the AKSESS option.

If you have any questions regarding SHARP Security or would like to request a copy of the SHARP Security Guidelines, please contact Gina Vinyard at Gina.Vinyard@state.ks.us or 785-296-4314.

Taxable Group Life Insurance and the Annual Benefits Base Rate

Internal Revenue Service Code Section 79 requires the inclusion of the cost of employer provided group term life insurance coverage in excess of $50,000 to be included in an employee's federal and state taxable grosses. In the SHARP manual, this amount is referred to as taxable group life insurance. Employees covered by KPERS Death and Disability Insurance being paid more than $1,282.05 per bi-weekly pay cycle are subject to taxable group life insurance. When viewing paychecks in SHARP or reviewing your KPAY002 report, you see the amount for taxable group life insurance listed on employee paychecks as deduction code GTL___, deduction class Taxable, and deduction type General. The amount, which is not a deduction from the employee's paycheck, is added to the employee's taxable grosses for federal, state, Social Security, and Medicare taxes.

In SHARP, the calculation for the taxable group life insurance amount

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Inside This Issue

This issue will focus on:

Kansas Learning Quest Education Savings Program

The Kansas Learning Quest Education Savings Program became available July 1, 2000 and is administered by the Kansas State Treasurer's Office. American Century Investment Company was selected as the program manager and is responsible for managing the investments.

House Bill 2655 authorized a payroll deduction for the Learning Quest program to become effective in Fiscal Year 2001. The Learning Quest bi-weekly payroll deduction was effective for the payroll period beginning July 23, 2000 and ending August 5, 2000 paid August 18, 2000. The Learning Quest deduction will be taken on an after tax basis and will have the deduction code of "LEARNQ." The new deduction will be displayed on paycheck stubs/advices and the Regent's warrant registers as "LEARN QUEST."

Payroll deductions for the Learning Quest program will be remitted to American Century on payday. American Century should also post the payroll deductions to the individual employee accounts on payday.

State of Kansas employees interested in participating in the Learning Quest program through payroll deduction should complete the following steps:

- Call 1-800-579-2203 or visit www.learningquestsavings.com to request an enrollment packet.
- Advise the representative they are a State of Kansas employee interested in participating in the payroll deduction program.
- An enrollment packet will then be sent to the employee's home with the payroll deduction forms. The payroll deduction forms need to be completed and returned to American Century.
- After enrollment is approved by American Century, a confirmation letter will be sent to the employee.
- If the employee elects a payroll deduction, the employee will give the confirmation letter to the agency's personnel/payroll officer for entry into the payroll system. Agency personnel are reminded that no payroll deduction should be set up for a Learning Quest Account without the confirmation letter from American Century to the employee.

SHARP on-line agencies will enter enrollment data for Learning Quest through the General Deduction Data panel using the following path: Go, Compensate Employees, Maintain Payroll Data U.S., Use, General Deduction Data, Update/Display All. SHARP paper agencies should complete an "Employee Data Sheet" adding the deduction for the employee and submit the "Employee Data Sheet" to the Division of Personnel Services. The Division of Personnel Services is currently revising the "Employee Data Sheet" to enable entry of the Learning Quest deduction. SHARP paper agencies should enter the "LEARNQ" deduction code and the appropriate deduction amount on the "Employee Data Sheet" in the section entitled "Other General Deductions." Note: the deduction calculation routine for the "LEARNQ" deduction should be equal to "flat amount."

The Learning Quest bi-weekly deduction will become effective the next payroll period following the date the confirmation letter is signed, and will remain in effect until written authorization is received to cancel or change the deduction, or until termination of employment.

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Long Term Care

New Open Enrollment materials are now available from Hartford Life for the Kansas State Employees Long-Term Care Program. Employees may call 1-877-463-9871 to request an enrollment package. Enrollment forms may be submitted to Hartford at any time.

In addition, employees may request the Long-Term Care premiums be payroll deducted. Forms to authorize payroll deduction may be requested by calling the toll free number.

Exceptional Qualifications and Lack of Eligible Candidates

Recently, the Division of Personnel Services analyzed agency use of the Action/Reason codes used to record hires, rehires, pay increases and promotions due to exceptional qualifications or a lack of eligible candidates in the SHARP system. This review determined there is often a misunderstanding of what Action/Reason code should be used in each of these situations. Since it is critical that the correct Action/Reason codes are used to record all employee job data transactions, Division of Personnel Services will sponsor a data cleanup effort.

Agencies should expect to receive a memo with detailed explanations of which Action/Reason codes to use when entering employee transactions related to exceptional qualifications or a lack of eligible candidates. For agencies with incorrect data, the memo will have a list attached of data that was incorrectly entered so that the correct Action/Reason code can be identified and fixes can be applied to the SHARP system.

A summary table of the appropriate Action/Reason codes to use for exceptional qualifications and lack of eligible candidates is provided below. You may wish to clip out this chart and use it as a helpful resource when entering data into SHARP.

Action	Reason	When to Use
HIR	VAC	Hire Vacant should only be used to Hire a new employee at step 1 of the pay grade.
HIR	HSH	Hire Higher Step - Exceptional Qualifications should be used whenever hiring a new employee above step 1 when “based on the candidate’s education, training, experience, skills, and other qualifications.” Must be approved by the Agency Appointing Authority. (K.A.R. 1-5-8(b)(1))
HIR	HSL	Higher Step - Lack of Eligibles, should be used for hiring above step due to lack of eligible candidates. Must be approved by the Division of Personnel Services. Approval is by Fiscal Year and must be renewed each year. (K.A.R. 1-5-8 (b)(2))
REH	REH	Rehire Rehire should only be used to Rehire a former employee at step 1 of the pay grade.
REH	RIN	Rehire Reinstatement is used when reinstating an employee within 1 year of voluntary termination. (K.A.R. 1-5-10 (a))
REH	REM	Rehire Reemployment is used when reemploying an employee within 3 years of a layoff.
REH	HSR	Rehire Higher Step - Exceptional Qualifications is used when rehiring a previous employee above step 1. Must be approved by the Agency Appointing Authority. (K.A.R. 1-5-8(b)(1))
REH	HSN	Rehire Higher Step Reinstatement - Exceptional Qualifications is used when reinstating an employee above the step they were paid on when they left state employment. Must be approved by the Agency Appointing Authority. (K.A.R. 1-5-10 (a))
REH	HSE	Rehire Higher Step Reemploy - Exceptional Qualifications is used when reemploying an employee above the step they were paid on when they were laid off. Must be approved by the Agency Appointing Authority. (K.A.R. 1-5-10 (a))
REH	HSL	Rehire Higher Step - Lack of Eligibles, is used when an agency has been authorized to hire above step for specific job code and geographic region due to a lack of eligible candidates. Must be approved by the Division of Personnel Services. (K.A.R. 1-5-8(b)(2))
PAY	HSL	Pay Rate Change - Higher Step is used when an agency is approved for hiring above step due to lack of eligible candidates and must raise the pay of all incumbents in the class who are being paid at a lower step to the higher beginning pay. (K.A.R. 1-5-8(b)(2)(A))

Taxable Group Life Insurance and the Annual Benefits Base Rate

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starts with the employee's Annual Benefits Base Rate which is a field that is stored on the Job Data 3 panel. Therefore, the accuracy of this amount is extremely important. Please review and verify this amount for your employees by September 30, 2000. There after, you should review and update the Annual Benefits Base Rate on a regular basis.

SHARP does automatically update the Annual Benefits Base Rate when there is an automated step increase or COLA, but the calculation is based on the new rate of pay only. For non-exempt employees, the Annual Benefits Base Rate is the hourly rate X 2080 X FTE. For exempt employees, the base rate is the pay period salary X 26. To these calculations, you must add longevity pay, overtime, shift differential and other earnings. Pay out earnings for vacation and sick leave from the pay period of termination are excluded from the calculation and should not be added to the base rate.

For specific instructions on the calculation of the taxable group life insurance amount, please see the instructions found in the SHARP Computer Based Training Manual, Payroll Book One, Introduction to SHARP Payroll, Payroll Policies and Procedures, Taxable Group Life Insurance Section. If you have any questions about taxable group life insurance or the Annual Benefits Base Rate, please contact Sunni Zentner at (785) 296-7058, or by e-mail at Sunni.Zentner@state.ks.us.

Dear Dead Eye…

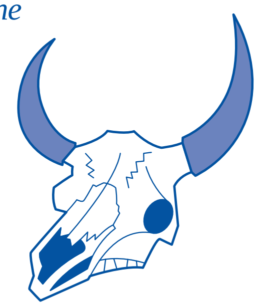
Q: What do I do if I receive the error message, "Check error in cache file?"

A: You can conveniently delete your cache files from the SHARP Sign-on Dialog Box by taking the following steps:

1. Double click on the "Log on to SHARP" icon on your desktop.
2. Click on "Delete Cache Files."
3. A message will display asking, "Do you want to delete your SHARP cache files?"
4. Click Yes
5. A message will display that reads, "All cache files have been removed."

It is recommended that you delete your cache files once every week in order to stay current on panel changes and to avoid receiving error messages.

All questions for Dear Dead Eye are welcomed and should be directed to "Dead Eye" at the project address, (785) 296-4886, or E-Mail: douglas.quinn@state.ks.us Questions will be answered in the following issue of the newsletter.



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